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EVENTS IN THE UKRAINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, Ukraine is a country that was at one time a satellite of the Soviet Union, and 10 years ago it moved towards its own independence. Our President, Ronald Reagan, stood before the world and said, "Tear down that wall." And when the wall fell there were so many nations across the Soviet Union who became free, and Ukraine was one of those nations.

Ukraine, in declaring its independence, established the rights of its citizens, the same rights that are the bedrock of our democracy here in America. Freedom of speech, the right to assemble, freedom of press, are rights that have been granted to the people of Ukraine, and they are rights that have been fundamental to the unfolding of democracy in that country.

A few months ago, a Ukrainian journalist by the name of Heorhiy Gongadze, remember that name, it is an unusual name, but remember it, Heorhiy Gongadze, a Ukrainian journalist who challenged the government of his country, as journalists do here every day, Georgiy Gongadze was found dead. His head was cut off. His hands had their fingerprints removed, obviously with acid, and his hand was protruding from the shallow grave that his body had been put in.

After that, tapes were discovered, tapes that had been recorded by a member of the Presidential security staff in Ukraine, tapes were discovered that had the voice of the President of Ukraine on those tapes, although the government denies it is his voice, and the President of the Ukraine was calling upon someone to get rid of this journalist; very clear implications here, very clear implications that the President of a free nation was involved in calling for the demise of a reporter who later on turned up dead with his head cut off and his fingerprints obliterated.

As a result of this despicable crime, freedom-loving people in Ukraine began to protest: protest the government, protest what happened in the attack on the free press. They set up, as a symbol of their protest, a series of tents that went for a couple hundred yards down the main street of Kiev, the capital city. It was very impressive to see, and it was a protest that came from all levels of Ukrainian culture and society, from young and old, from the political left and the political

right, from the political center, from nongovernment organizations, members of the media, and from members of the Ukrainian Rada, all involved in this protest.

The protests had been going on in this tent city for 2 months. A U.S. congressional delegation led by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), a delegation that I was proud to be a member of, visited Ukraine last week, and we met with members of the press who expressed their concern about freedom of the press, about the chilling effect which the murder of this reporter had on free press in Ukraine.

We met with members of the nongovernment organizations who expressed concern about this tendency to drift away from democracy that the government had shown. We went, and some of us visited this tent city and actually talked to the people.

We had the opportunity to meet with the President of Ukraine in a 2-hour-and-15 minute meeting. During that meeting, the President assured us that he stood for freedom of press, that he stood for freedom of speech, that he stood for the right of assembly, those same rights that we know so well, those same rights that were accorded to the people of Ukraine.

We were asked by the media before we left, what would happen if, after we left, these tents came down? Because it was thought that our presence there discouraged any effort to remove the tents.

We found out the answer today, because once the congressional delegation left, the government ordered the police to remove the tents, protesters arrested, tents thrown in the truck. An area known as Independence Square is boarded off in Ukraine, boarded off, a statue of St. Michael sitting in the middle of that square that is boarded off, and people cannot even gather together.

There will be consequences, I say to President Kuchma, for his denial of the right of assembly and freedom of speech in his country. The international community is watching. The whole world is watching.

ROLE MODELS AND BLACK HISTORY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, promoting awareness of black history throughout the month of February allowed all of us an opportunity to not only learn from the past, but also remind ourselves and others about the importance of practicing acceptance and inclusion. However, while black history is recognized in February, it does not stop today, on March 1. If it truly is history in February, it is also history in March

through January. That is why I decided to make these remarks today, rather than in February.

I am pleased that our Nation has chosen to recognize and celebrate the history of the African American culture. History teaches us that every culture and every society endures good and bad, and it is essential that we continue to learn from our past.

From the days of early American statehood, when African Americans like Harriet Tubman and many others fought to gain freedom from slavery, to the inspiring civil rights movement fostered by the determination of individuals such as Rosa Parks, Daisy Bates, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to our current times today, African Americans have played a vital role in America's history.

Last month, as we celebrated Black History Month, I was reminded of how the contributions of African Americans have had a particular influence on my life. Growing up during the 1960s and 1970s in south Arkansas in small towns like Emmet, Hope, and Prescott, I was fortunate to be among the first generation to attend integrated public schools.

Those were difficult times for our Nation, but as the son of public school educators, I was taught early on that blacks and whites could live and work together and value each other's differences.

As many small schools did at that time, our elementary school in Emmet combined two grades in each classroom. The teachers had close relationships with the students, and had a profound influence on our young lives.

I remember that two particular teachers played a special role in my upbringing as a young student, perhaps because they were both African American, or perhaps because they were simply warm, caring individuals. Their names were Velma Rowe and Corrine Gilbert.

Ms. Rowe and Ms. Gilbert always went the extra mile to make a difference in our lives as students, whether it was providing encouragement when we were having trouble keeping up, guidance and discipline when we stepped out of line, or congratulations for a job well done.

I may have been too young at that time to fully understand the history of racial inequality in our country, but looking back, they gave me a special insight into the important role of African Americans in our community and in our society. The impact of their example as teachers and as leaders in the African American community helped to shape my view, as I grew older, that we must all work together to accept each other and respect our differences.

In class, Ms. Rowe and Ms. Gilbert taught all of us that we were each important as individuals, no matter what our race or background, no matter